

Help Sheet to Design a Tour for a Group Interested in Fine Arts and Traditional Crafts

The basics:

Both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan consist of Turkic peoples, so their art has traditional Turkic styles with influences from nomadic life. Centuries under Russian/Soviet rule have also brought Russian influences to art – you will especially find a lot of “Socialist Realism” in painting and sculpture. In addition, Uzbekistan, in particular, more closely connected to the Silk Road, has been affected by Persian, Islamic, and Chinese traditions.

How to research the topic:

You will probably find it easier to break down the subject into parts. Look up “Uzbek art” and “Uzbek crafts” and “Kazakh art” and “Kazakh crafts.” Another group will do architecture, so you don’t have to do that.

Uzbekistan seems to have more ceramic art and traditional embroidery than Kazakhstan, so be sure to look that up. Kazakhstan has some interesting artwork related to nomadic lifestyles. Also, both have interesting paintings and sculptures from the Soviet period – much of it in the “Socialist realist” style (look up that), and see the nationalist art after the foundation of the independent states in 1991. Be sure to look at the statues of national heroes (who are being represented) and everything in the newly-built Kazakhstani capital of Nur-Sultan (called “Astana” until 2019).

Planning your itinerary:

Be sure to look up art museums, public places with sculptures, ethnographic museums, and traditional crafts workshops. Visit some of these as part of your program.

Travel from place to place:

In planning your itinerary, you can take short regional flights to get to or from big cities that are far apart (e.g. from Nur-Sultan to Almaty or Tashkent). Be sure to check on Kayak.com or some other site to see if there are flights between cities that you want to visit. You don’t want to waste time on travel from place to place, so find direct flights. You must somehow strike a balance in your itinerary so that your travelers can see as many places as possible but not so many places that they spend all their time traveling without enough time to see things.